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AUTHOR Godbey, Ruth
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ABSTRACT

The staff of the Creighton University (Omaha, Nebraska) Health Sciences Library has been able to improve not only the library's public relations but also the image of the library by presenting weekly "Lunch-and-Learn" workshops. Since 1990, approximately 15 workshops have been presented each semester with topics ranging from cancer genetics and health care reform to surfing the Internet. In addition to library staff members serving as workshop leaders, Creighton University faculty members have also shared their fields of expertise. Attendance at these workshops has gradually increased as topics have been revised, more avenues of publicity have been devised, and the workshops have been kept to a length of under one hour. Evaluation forms and interest questionnaires are distributed at all workshops to gauge the interests of the library clients and to incorporate their suggestions for future workshops. The highly successful "Lunch-and-Learn" workshops are increasing clients' awareness of the library's services and activities, and will therefore be continued. (Author/SWC)

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ENHANCING YOUR LIBRARY'S PUBLIC RELATIONS WITH "LUNCH-AND-LEARN" WORKSHOPS

Ruth Godbey
Health Sciences Library
Creighton University
Omaha, Nebraska

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ABSTRACT

The staff of the Creighton University Health Sciences Library has been able not only to improve the library's public relations but also the image of the library by the presentation of weekly "Lunch-and-Learn" workshops during the past six years. Approximately fifteen workshops have been presented each semester with topics ranging from cancer genetics and health care reform to surfing the Internet. In addition to library staff members as workshop leaders, we also have asked Creighton University faculty members to share their fields of expertise. Attendance at these workshops has gradually increased as we are constantly revising the topics presented, adding more avenues of publicity, and keeping the length of the workshops under one hour. We believe that our "Lunch-and-Learn" workshops are increasing our clients' awareness of the library's services and activities, and we are planning to continue this successful program.

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In the fall of 1990, the Reference staff of Creighton University Health Sciences Library instituted a new program to serve the clients. The library had recently purchased subscriptions to several biomedical electronic databases and publicizing these new databases became a primary objective for this new library program.

Workshops demonstrating each database were planned with any university faculty, staff, or student or any staff of St. Joseph Hospital eligible to attend with no charge. A nominal fee was charged for any other workshop attendee.

Demonstrations of the electronic databases were given by the members of the Reference staff. Topics included not only the databases available at the library but separate workshops were also presented offering effective searching strategies and techniques.

Recognizing the clients' diverse schedules and in order to prevent scheduling conflicts with other university departmental offerings, the Reference staff presented each workshop topic at various times during the day and on different days of the week. Presentations were given morning, afternoon, and evening with Saturday morning also included as a scheduling option. Workshops varied in length from one hour to 3½ hours with the average length of two hours. Time was provided to give the attendees sufficient "hands-on" experience in searching the new databases. Approximately sixty workshops

were presented from 1990-1993 with an average attendance of three persons per workshop.

In the spring of 1994, the Reference staff decided to evaluate the workshop program in an effort to increase attendance and to reach more library clients. The staff realized library patrons wished to learn more about the electronic databases but were finding it difficult to attend due to their own departmental demands and schedules.

Several changes were implemented in revising the workshop offerings. Morning, afternoon, and evening presentations were eliminated. Plans were initiated to offer weekly "Lunch-and-Learn" workshops with soft drinks provided by the library. The length of all workshops would be kept under one hour.

In addition to Reference staff as workshop leaders, university faculty and hospital personnel were invited to share their expertise in their respective disciplines. National Library Week in April was selected for this "symposia" with daily workshops presented by outside speakers whose topics would not necessarily be limited to health science related subjects.

The response from the faculty and hospital staff to give workshop presentations was prompt and extremely positive. Faculty comments ranged from requesting to being invited every year to suggestions of additional topics by faculty desiring to share their special interests. One faculty member stated

that he would do anything for the library. The Reference staff was especially appreciative of the cooperation from the faculty and believed this response directly resulted from the excellent service which the faculty was receiving from the various departments of the Health Sciences Library.

In addition to expanding the speaker base, additional avenues of publicity included campus and hospital newsletters, flyers distributed to every faculty member in the health sciences departments, and a World Wide Web homepage constructed to further publicize the program.

In order to reach more library clients and to adjust to their respective schedules, workshops were offered at additional sites in the health sciences building and at the hospital. Fees for non-university attendees were eliminated. Due to the successful response to the first National Library Week Symposia in 1994, a similar daily symposia was implemented for the fall semesters.

Results from the revisions of the workshop program were evident from the 1994 Spring Semester. Seventy-seven workshops were offered between 1994 and the spring of 1996. Attendance increased dramatically as the average attendance increased to nine with several workshops repeatedly having over twenty people in attendance. The most popular workshop topics appeared to be those dealing with surfing the Internet and faculty presentations on such topics as health care reform, cancer genetics, and Native American medicine.

The Lunch-and-Learn Workshop program has enhanced both the public relations and the image of the Health Sciences Library. The Reference staff believes the program has increased the library clients' awareness of the various services and activities of the library. Response from clients has continued to be positive and rewarding. By distributing evaluation forms and interest questionnaires at all workshops, the staff has been able to keep abreast of the interests of the library clients and to incorporate their suggestions for future workshops. The Lunch-and-Learn Workshop program has proven to be a highly successful program of Creighton University Health Sciences Library.